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AUTHOR Maher, Patricia A.; Passmore, Denise
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ABSTRACT

A study conducted life history interviews with long-time adult educators regarding their career paths and choices, philosophical perspectives, influences in professional careers, changes witnessed in the field, and predictions about future trends in adult education. A literature review focused on the history of adult education in the United States and major philosophical perspectives about adult education that have evolved. Study results were based on 17 adult educators who have been formally involved in the field throughout North America for at least 40 years and whose roles in the field were confirmed through published work or positions of responsibility or leadership. Data were collected through interviews, written responses to questionnaires, and review of background information from vitas and published literature. Six major themes were identified in data analysis: (1) there were commonalities in influences that helped shaped their careers, with most citing Cyril Houle as having been most influential; (2) philosophical perspectives were diverse but remained generally unchanged; (3) most participants identified similar changes in the field over the past 40 years; (4) predictions about future trends were congruent with their individual philosophical perspectives; (5) almost none of the individuals intentionally went into the field of adult education; and (6) even though most are officially retired, they were still involved in some form of adult education. (The survey is appended.) (YLB)

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CONVERSATIONS WITH LONG-TIME ADULT EDUCATORS

A research paper presented at

FERA

The annual meeting of the Florida Educational Research Association

November 8, 2000

By

Patricia A. Maher

Denise Passmore

Major Professor: Waynne B. James, Ed. D

University of South Florida, Tampa

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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CONVERSATIONS WITH LONG-TIME ADULT EDUCATORS

Abstract

Since the early 1960's the second and third generations of adult education professionals have carried the "torch" through varying phases of a developing field. The purpose of this study was to conduct life history interviews with long-time adult educators regarding their career paths and choices, their philosophical perspectives, influences in their professional careers, changes they have witnessed in the field, and their predictions about future trends in adult education. Their wisdom and experiences were the source of valuable lessons to the younger members of the field. Six major themes were identified in the analysis of the interview data. In response to our original research questions, there were commonalities in influences that helped shaped their careers, with most citing Cyril Houle as having been most influential. Philosophical perspectives were diverse but remained generally unchanged. Most of the participants identified similar changes in the field over the past 40 years. Predictions about the future trends were congruent with their individual philosophical perspectives. Two emergent themes related to accidental entry into the field and retirement activities. The perspectives of the participants enriched us as students and taught us to take a broader view of the field of adult education.

CONVERSATIONS WITH LONG-TIME ADULT EDUCATORS

INTRODUCTION

Many examples of adult education in practice can be identified throughout the history of mankind, yet the *field of study* known as *adult education* is a relatively young concept. Existing formally in the United States only since 1926 (Knowles, 1977), the first references in the literature are associated with the founding of the American Association for Adult Education (AAAE), whose purpose was to unite agencies, services, and information related to adult education (Essert, 1967). This marks the official cornerstone for the beginning of a highly diverse field that permeates virtually all aspects of life.

From the early to middle 1900's, research, development, and promotion of the field progressed rapidly, and the foundational building blocks of theory were established. (Knowles, 1977, Essert, 1967). By the middle 1900's, several distinct trends were identified in the development of the field (Essert, 1967). These included a demand for both national and local integration of adult educational activities, growing financial support of the field by private foundations and the government, an increase in both the body of knowledge and numbers of students, and growth in the conscious existence of adult education within many institutions and organizations.

Since then, the second and third generations of professionals have carried the "torch" through subsequent phases of a maturing field. Many texts have been written for the purpose of tracing the history and identifying the different philosophical aspects of adult education.

At times controversy has been evoked among adult education professionals as the field has evolved and branched in multiple directions. Based on the dissimilarity of views sometimes held by second and third generation adult educators, current practitioners and students often grapple with questions regarding the most pressing issues for the present needs and future directions in the field. Gathering the wisdom and experiences of these long-time adult educators can provide us with invaluable lessons. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to collect and analyze information from the most senior members of the field of adult education regarding their career paths and choices, their philosophical perspectives, influences in their professional careers, changes they have witnessed in the field, and their predictions about future trends in adult education. The intention was to utilize the findings from the respondents to add to the depth and breadth of information about the field of adult education over the last half of century and provide guidance to newer practitioners.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Philosophically, the field of adult education values lifelong learning and the development of wisdom from life experiences. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) have concluded that "wisdom is grounded in life's rich experiences and therefore is developed through the process of aging (p.165)." They point out the importance of what has become known as the *third age* – the part of life many people in modern society can now enjoy as healthy individuals capable of further learning and available to give back to society through their wisdom. It is in the spirit of this philosophy that this study is being conducted, to learn from the experiences of long-time adult educators and to ensure the wisdom they have gained throughout their time spent in the field is not lost.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were developed by the researchers to guide the collection and analysis of information from the participants. As an emergent design, it was anticipated that additional themes might arise from conversations with each participant.

1. What major influences have shaped their careers?
2. How would they define their philosophical perspective and has it changed over time?
3. What changes have they seen during their involvement in the field?
4. Where do they feel the field is headed and why?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the related literature focused on two aspects: the history of adult education in the United States and the major philosophical perspectives or approaches to adult education that have evolved to date.

Enlightenment and lifelong learning go hand-in-hand with a free democratic society. Rooted in the early history of America are examples of the importance of education for both children and adults (Knowles, 1977). During the 100-year period beginning with the late 1700's, several informal opportunities for adult learning developed, such as newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets. This was followed by the establishment of library and museum systems. During the next 50 years many opportunities for adult education increased in number and organization such as Agricultural Extension services, colleges and

universities, libraries and museums, voluntary associations and agencies, and religious institutions. As these systems developed, the content of adult learning opportunities shifted from general knowledge to specific areas of interest or need, such as vocational skills, citizenship, social reform, and public affairs. Beginning in the early 1920's and continuing into the present, adult education became an integral part of American life. Stimulated by two world wars, a major economic depression and subsequent technological and economical growth, adult education developed into a national institutional system.

As a field of study and practice, adult education is unique in that it is both an entity unto itself and a process that impacts and permeates most aspects of our democratic society. As a result, several philosophical perspectives defining what should and should not be considered true adult education have evolved. In the literature, several frameworks have been applied to the various philosophical approaches. Apps (1973) looked at adult education philosophies through the lenses of essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, reconstructionism, and existentialism. Elias and Merriam (1994) offered frameworks including liberalism, progressivism, behaviorism, humanism, and critical/radicalism. Beder's framework (1989) offered a collapsed version of these same philosophies.

Tracing the history of adult education in the United States illustrates how and why the field developed. It helps clarify the vital role that the education and enlightenment of adults plays in the continuing success of a democratic society. Of the philosophical perspectives presented here, both the liberal and critical perspectives have their foundational building blocks in early American history. The behaviorist and humanist perspectives were more recent developments related to modern educational and psychological theory.

METHOD

Research Design

Since the purpose of this study was to gain an in depth understanding of the field of adult education as seen through the eyes its practitioners over the past 40 to 60 years, a basic or generic qualitative format was determined most appropriate. This type of naturalistic inquiry is described by Merriam (1998) as "simply seek(ing) to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved (p.11)." In this case, we were interested in the cumulative wisdom that Adult Education professionals have gained across the years. By collecting and analyzing reflective perspectives based on their career experiences, we hoped to learn from their accumulated experiences. Beyond simple facts, our purpose was to engage the participants and relate to them regarding their passions, concerns, and goals in the field.

Sample Selection

Qualitative inquiry relies on purposeful, rather than representative sampling and an emergent, rather than an inordinate design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, individuals chosen for this study were adult educators who have been formally involved in the field throughout North America for at least 40 years and whose role in the field was confirmed through published work or position of responsibility or leadership. A priority list of possible participants was developed after reviewing the published literature and seeking suggestions from colleagues in the field. In addition, network sampling was applied by asking each person to suggest someone else who would fit the criteria and may be interested in participating. This paper is based on a total of seventeen respondents.

Data Collection

Data was collected three ways: through interviews, written responses to questionnaires, and review of background information from vitas and published literature. Each individual was first asked to complete a written questionnaire that consisted of both biographical items and open-ended philosophical questions (see Appendix). Upon receipt of the completed questionnaire, participants were contacted for a personal interview (primarily by telephone), which was audio-taped. The interview offered a forum to personally interact with each individual and an opportunity to explore in more depth some of the items addressed in the questionnaire.

Analysis of Data

As recommended by Merriam (1998), narrative analysis was ongoing throughout data collection. For example, after each interview, tapes were transcribed and responses organized according to the framework of the four major research questions developed at the onset of the study. In addition, as research progressed, emerging themes were identified as they arose. Questionnaires and interview transcriptions were coded for each participant to facilitate referencing. A simple coding system was established using participant initials, an S or I (for survey or interview notes) and page numbers. For example, JSIp4 would represent John Smith's interview page 4.

RESULTS

A number of common themes have emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire devised for this study was designed to address four primary areas of interest regarding influences, changes in the field, philosophies, and future predictions. As expected, additional areas of significance, or themes, emerged from the responses and interviews regarding entry into the field and retirement activities. We will therefore report on a total of six major themes. In most cases the six themes were prevalent among most of the responses. In this section we will report the results organized by each of the six themes. Please note that the first initial of their first names identifies respondents, with the addition of a number to distinguish duplicate initials.

Theme 1: Major influences that have shaped their careers

The purpose of this question was to understand the different areas within the life of the participants that may have shaped their careers. Specifically, when asked who directly influenced their careers, several names recurred throughout many of their responses, but the one person most frequently mentioned was Cyril Houle.

Cyril Houle was professor emeritus of education of the University of Chicago and an internationally recognized leader in adult and continuing education. Houle, who died on May 6, 1998, was a faculty member at the University of Chicago from 1939-1978, and provided counsel to the Kellogg Foundation for some 60 years. His books include *The Inquiring Mind, The Design of Education, Continuing Learning in the Professions,* and *Patterns of Learning.* Many of the persons who participated in our study were Kellogg Foundation scholars and studied under Dr. Houle. (The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 to help

people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.) A4 says about Houle: "He was just the right person at the right time. He was very interested in theory, theoretical frameworks, conceptual frameworks and it turned out that's what I was interested in too. I don't think I could have even put that into words when I arrived in Chicago, but working with him I got really fascinated with how you organize knowledge about a particular question. He was a one person department and very crucial, we were all there because of him."

However, not all of the individuals interviewed felt that his influence was positive. P describes Houle as "very elitist – I didn't agree with a lot of what he said, he contributed a lot to the field of AE and was also very committed to grad students. Very formal and proper. He could not accept the social changes of the young people of the sixties."

Other individuals who were mentioned as influences, though less frequently include George Aker, Wayne Schroeder, Malcolm Knowles, Roby Kidd, Ivan Illich, and Paolo Freire. In addition to these, some of the respondents mentioned other participants in this study as important influences. In addition, beyond professors and instructors, many of the participants, when asked who indirectly influenced their careers, have included family members, clergymen, and prominent social icons such as Ralph Nader and Malcolm X. R included his sixth grade teacher and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). G lists political figures such as the US Secretary of Education, Ted Bell. J1 refers to being influenced by philosophers such as Jefferson, Paine, and Emerson, and his buddies from WWII.

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Some of the other influences of the careers of the respondents include such world-changing events as wars. A1 stated that "my World War II experience convinced me that there must be ways other than war to solve problems. Lifelong education is one way to resolve this and other global problems (ACSp4)." The Vietnam war was also mentioned as an influence along with other events of the sixties. P describes how "the time of Vietnam and civil rights, ...very open – a lot of social space of innovation and new thinking and for changing your ideas." B lists the County Extension system, which is how a number of the respondents began their careers in adult education. A3 identifies humanistic psychology as a major influence in his career.

Theme 2: What were their philosophical perspectives and have they changed?

The results for this area were more challenging to identify than some of the more straightforward questions. Though some of the respondents were able to put their philosophies succinctly into words, others' philosophies had to be derived from the content of the interviews and questionnaires. However, it was clearly evident that in regard to the second part of the question, very few of the respondents indicated their philosophies had changed over the course of their careers. Some did feel that certain aspects had more emphasis than when they first began in the field. For example, A1 said that his experience over time "strengthened my belief that the adult is the basic focus of Adult Education and that all learning is individualistic – only an individual learns."

There are likely several explanations as to why the respondents did not feel their philosophies had changed over the span of their careers, however, the theory we felt most compelling was that most of these individuals did not intentionally choose adult education as

a career. They almost universally began their careers in other fields and more or less drifted into adult education. Consequently, the respondents' philosophies evolved into their present state.

Upon our examination of the philosophies espoused by the subjects, we were able to classify them into three major philosophical categories. The first group were those that saw adult education as a means to social reforms (the radicals). The second group consisted of persons who focused on the needs of the individuals (the humanists). Finally, the third group is comprised of those individuals who embraced both of these philosophies (the liberals).

Of the three groups, the radicals were the most clear about their philosophical beliefs and were not hesitant to state that they were radicals. J3 describes himself as "...a radical, democratic individualist socialist seeking spiritual approaches to reach a fundamentally improved society." These are the individuals who are the "disciples" of Paolo Friere and Ivan Illich. Like Friere, whose early work involved educating Latin American peasants in order to liberate them from oppressive regimes, these radicals want to educate adults to take charge of their destinies. "We need to make people understand the goals of Adult Education, to foster a person's Agency and Democracy ... we need to hold on to those convictions and share them." R further illustrates this by his declaration that the only occurrences of adult education that he acknowledges as meaningful are in the leadership of individuals such as "Ralph Nader doing his thing." R indicates that he is disappointed with current practices in adult education and feels that many adult educators do not practice what they preach and have "given up." He defines his continuing commitment to "real adult education" as evidenced in his current role as a community activist.

These radicals are particularly disturbed by the current involvement by adult educators in human resource development (HRD) initiatives. J3 asserts that the field is "...too focused on compulsory education, making money, (and) certification" and that graduate programs are much more about making money, not about the original ideals of the field. R concurs by emphasizing his beliefs that "real adult education is non-institutionalized, voluntary efforts to bring about change that is not necessarily in the interest of the power group." P declares that "HRD training is all about social control."

The second group, the humanists, centers their beliefs around the focus of adult education as it meets the needs of the individual, for purposes identified by the individual. A captures this more global perspective of adult education by iterating that "...the mission of Adult Education is to assist adults to acquire further control of their current circumstances and their future destinies." B believes that it is important for the field to keep up with changes in our culture. H views his role as a professor to enhance the individual student's efforts to define his or her own integrity and area of responsibility. He also was concerned about detrimental effects that radicals might inflict on the field of adult education by insisting on a one-dimensional vision of its purpose.

The liberals comprised the smallest group. These individuals embraced ideals from both the humanists and the radicals. J1 expresses his respect for learners as self-directing and of the involvement of learners in deciding their program of learning. He also supported the inclusion of training professionals under the adult education umbrella and was positive about the use of technology in meeting the needs of the adult learner. However, his greatest regret was that adult education had not done an "adequate job of meeting the major social, political

and ethical challenges of the day." Though enthusiastically supporting HRD initiatives for their contributions, like the radicals, the liberals eschewed mandatory adult education.

Theme 3: What changes have they seen during their involvement in the field?

The intent of this question was to learn from our respondents what significant changes they witnessed over the course of their careers in the field of adult education. In addition to obtaining a record of their observations, we also discussed their perceptions on how these changes affected the field.

The change most commonly cited by the respondents was the move from individualized learning to HRD and vocational/professional training as being the emphasis in adult education. As expected, each individual contacted had a particularly strong feeling about the changes that have occurred. Some viewed these changes as positive, broadening the field of adult education. J1, for example, is excited about organizations like ASTD (American Society of Trainers and Developers) and what they bring to the field. A1 views this increased commitment to education under various titles as an "expansion of learning opportunities for all adults in all aspects of society." He envisions increased opportunities for all adults and greater academic recognition. B witnessed the movement from "Americanization to Agricultural Extension, to ABE, to Literacy to HRD."

Others, who sprang from the social reformers philosophy of adult education, viewed changes more negatively. R is particularly unhappy about the "increasing institutionalization of the field, the worst aspects of professionalization. Adult education has been something that people shared amongst themselves. The notion of gaining access to the inner sanctum has not been a part of the adult education milieu, you learned things as you experienced them and

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you shared them with like-minded colleagues." He believes that the field has tended to become involved "where the money is" neglecting the needs of poorer people by not focusing on HRD and community colleges rather than adult basic education (ABE). J's concurrent opinion is that: "When I was first involved, education to make money was not generally considered adult education, now it is dominant." J2 notes the increased professionlization of the field, that it has become more intellectual and less practical. He is concerned that we have lost sight of adult education's original purpose which was to "foster agency and democracy."

H makes similar observations about the move to HRD but does not express a particular preference and in fact feels that his function is to prepare students to move in either direction. "My role as an adult educator professor is either on the liberal or professional side, that doesn't mean someone else can be a reformer if they want to, but I don't see that as my role as professor, my role is to try to make sure that my students have the professional competence to practice in whatever institution they find themselves. To prepare professional practitioners to work with adults wherever they find themselves."

Some of the respondents have observed that adult education is becoming more pervasive. A1 sees the pattern of lifelong education affecting an increasing number of adults and an acceptance of adult education by civil society and government. G likewise believes that ABE has become more visible along with an increase in vocational and basic skills education. A3 reminds us that in the 1950's the common belief was that most adults cannot learn so there was an emphasis on leisure activities. In the late 60's-70's, adults began to get into a "survival period" and it became necessary for them to update or learn new skills. In addition, major companies began to have a need for better-trained workers and began to

develop extensive training programs within their organizations. C mentions the increase in professional literature and literacy materials that has grown exponentially since he began his work in the 1950's.

J1 believes that the introduction of technology enables many more persons to avail themselves of adult education, though he was dismayed by the mandatory requirements that began to accompany the increased opportunities. W lists the introduction of media and new forums such as distance education as impacting how we do adult education. H mentions the increase in the number of graduate programs.

Theme 4: Where do they feel the field is headed and why?

Responses for this question were difficult to isolate from several of the previous topics. Respondents who talked about change, as in the previous section, believed that the changes they saw indicated the future trends of the field. For example, most feel that the increased pervasiveness of HRD and technology will only continue to escalate. The radicals, consequently, believe that this is the "death knell" for adult education as they define it. P states that "much of adult education that is going on now is not seen as adult education by the HRD types." Therefore, she concludes that it does not really matter what happens to the field. H also sees the current practice of adult education disappearing. Instead, he predicts that "it will be more of a service area rather than a major. We will teach strategies and procedures with doctors, nurses, accountants, in terms of how to teach their thing within their business." J expresses concerns about compulsory education, certification and is particularly frustrated about the future because of the current belief that "no alternative to the present system is possible." A4 admits to not being able to "figure out where it's heading."

Others, such as G, see ABE training and workplace literacy needs as increasing opportunities for adult educators. J1, who attended ASTD meetings and acquired their material, believes that they are "ahead of us" in meeting the needs of people in the field who wanted or needed training not education. W thinks that many of our (adult educator) functions are now being done by HRD organizations, consequently, we need to eliminate those tasks from our field and go and do something else.

A3 thinks that adult education is specializing, conforming to the way society is specializing. As adult education "reinvents" itself, what is surviving is specialists such as university adult educators and industrial adult educators. "It appears that the major institutions have captured adult education. … The essence of what I am doing now is trying to make some clarity about the attempt to capture learning. It's a very large scale enterprise right now. The major institutions have discovered that they need employees that are responsive to technological change. They have also discovered that the average person is at their best when they are learning something." C concurs, believing that there will always be an adult education department, but increasingly, other disciplines, such as agriculture, law, and medicine, will take over adult education for themselves.

B, who also is witness to the move from individualized learning to HRD, predicts that the baby boomers will move back to meeting individual needs. He feels that adult educators should be preparing for meeting the learning needs of baby boomers as they begin to retire in the next 10 to 25 years.

Emergent Themes 5 and 6

Though our questionnaire was designed primarily to evoke responses that would answer our four research questions, certain common themes tended to emerge from the

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answers we received. The two themes that garnered the most attention revolved around how each of the individuals originally came to the field of adult education and what were they doing in retirement, if applicable.

Theme 5: Entry into the field of adult education

Almost none of the individuals with whom we spoke, intentionally went into the field of adult education. Instead, they began their careers in a variety of occupations and pursuits and through various circumstances "fell" into the practice of adult education. As A3 states, "There are not many four year olds who tug at their mom's skirts and say I want to be an adult educator."

Some of the individuals we interviewed were working in careers entirely outside of the educational arena and sought additional training to enhance their abilities to perform their current jobs as well as provide them with some sort of professional credentials. Many of these individuals went in search of some program and were then advised to major in adult education, a field that previously was unknown to them. J2 relates how he began working with Minnesota Indian tribes in community development. "I was looking for a field to professionalize my position. Malcolm Knowles came through and advised me to work on a doctorate at UCLA."

R was working in mass media doing work in radio, newspaper and televisions, when he met an adult education specialist, Henry Alter, who was affiliated with national educational television. Alter convinced R that what he had been doing all along was adult education and persuaded him to pursue a graduate degree in the field.

P was training leaders in the church. "I did not see myself as doing adult education although obviously I was. I was asked to start a leadership program and I saw this as

educational and since I had no educational background I went to the university looking for work in group dynamics – they said you are an adult educator."

J3 taught Morse Code to a group of enlisted men in 1946 as part of the army of occupation in Germany. A3 sold books and got bored so he went back to school and got a graduate degree in the history of education. Unable to find a job and not sure what his next move would be, by chance, someone introduced him to Roby Kidd who offered him a job at the Canadian Association of Adult Education.

Other respondents were already involved as educators, though not necessarily in the field of adult education. G was a local public school administrator whose undergraduate degrees were in biological and physical education. A2 was a part-time adult art teacher. C was operating an evening college for veterans and was then selected to receive an adult education grant enabling him to obtain a degree.

Several of the respondents began their careers as county extension agents. J1 had wanted to be a county extension agent since "I saw a county agent when I was a kid on the farm doing a pruning demonstration." He majored in vocational education but continued to want to learn more and got the opportunity when he received a Kellogg fellowship to pursue a PhD in adult education. His major professor at the University of Chicago was another former county extension agent, B.

Theme 6: Retirement activities

Several of our respondents are still employed as professors, but the majority consider themselves retired. In fact, one of the most common responses we received when first approaching these individuals to participate in our study was that they have been out of the field so long they felt that they could not contribute meaningfully to our study. What we

discovered through our interviews, however, was that even though they are officially retired, most were still involved in some form of adult education.

One of the most common pursuits of the respondents was to use their skills to support their communities or religious organizations. R considers himself in his present state of retirement as a "community educator." He is involved in regularly writing letters to the editor and is an active participant and facilitator of community groups. At the age of 80, J1 serves as a part-time reporter for his local newspaper and has developed a seminar on human spirituality that he presents to his church and community.

Other respondents remain actively involved in the field of adult education by serving as consultants. A1 visits leaders throughout the world consulting on adult education initiatives. G is a consultant with the American Council on Education/GED Testing Service. In addition to his consulting activities, D teaches and advises adult education students.

Researching and writing was also a frequently mentioned activity among the respondents. B is doing research relating to how adult education can be utilized to meet the needs of the soon to be retiring baby boomers. J1 received a grant to research and write a book on the human spiritual condition. W is involved in his own individual learning project, which involves genealogy research and reminiscence writing. He also briefly returned to the University of Wisconsin on a consultant basis to ensure that the department of adult and continuing education was not eliminated. J2 is researching and writing on transformative learning.

C does not specify any particular task that he is currently involved in during retirement. Instead, when asked how he is presently using his background in adult education, he merely replies "To live fully each day."

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CONCLUSION

The field of adult education has evolved from 1926 to its present form and continues to evolve and shape itself as the demands of the culture change. Reactions to this evolution from the participants of our study varied from excitement about the possibilities to frustration over the "abandonment" of earlier ideals. The most controversial aspect in regards to the modern practice of adult education is related to the inclusion of HRD practitioners into the field. The debate rages on between those that feel that true adult education should be geared solely and absolutely towards social activism, versus the other side who view the social activist tradition as an irrelevant, idealist practice.

Determining what constitutes the field adult education, consequently, can be a dilemma for students entering the field. The idealism of earlier generations who sought to use adult education as a means to liberate specific groups of people through initiatives, such as voter registration and education, must be balanced by the needs of today's generation who require lifelong learning in order to update and improve job skills in a rapidly changing marketplace. The ideal situation, then, is a synthesis of these two schools of thought which provides the learners themselves with the freedom to choose what they need at any particular time throughout their life.

Several of our respondents likewise supported this synthesis view. H describes his job as a professor of adult education students as a facilitator that prepares his students with the abilities to perform their tasks competently regardless of which path they choose. A3 summarizes this concept when he states that "Learning improves people," therefore, regardless of whether adults are gathered together to advance job skills or take community action, it is the underlying distinctive processes that enable us to call it adult education.

In conclusion, the perspectives of the individuals with whom we talked enriched us, as students in adult education. It taught us to look at adult education in a broader range than we sometimes focus on within our program of study and showed us possibilities that had not always occurred to us as we have attempted to identify our own paths. Each of these individuals presented us with concepts and ideas that were unique and had relevance to the universality of the field. Narrowing the field to include one philosophy over the other would deny individuals opportunity and choice. Providing adults with the tools to develop their own lifelong learning curriculum has always been the ultimate purpose of adult education. Only when individuals can choose and develop as they need can they, in the words of C, use adult education "to live fully each day."

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Appendix

Conversations with Experts in Adult Education
Survey Questions

Name:_____ **Date of Interview:**_____
Address:_____ **Phone:**_____
_____ **E-mail:**_____
Interviewer:_____

The purpose of this survey is to interview senior experts in the field of adult education about their background in the field and their perceptions of change. We are interested in the changes you have seen throughout your career and how your thinking has evolved. There are both personal background and general field questions.

1. How many years have you been in the field of Adult Education?

2. How did you get into the field?

3. What was your undergraduate major?

4. Regarding your graduate study:
   A. What degree(s) in adult education did you earn? (if none, what were your graduate degrees in?)

   B. Where did you complete your degree(s)?

   C. When did you complete your degree(s)?

   D. Who was your major professor(s) and/or dissertation advisor(s)? (If different, who had more influence on you?)

5. In what setting did you spend the majority of your career in adult education (institutions, universities, specific type of job)?

6. How are you presently using your background in adult education?

7. What are the three most obvious changes in adult education that have occurred in the last 30-40 years or however long you were in the field?

8. What changes have you seen in the field of Adult Education in relation to:
   A. The program/institutional areas emphasized within the field (e.g., ABE, community colleges, HRD)?

   B. Job possibilities?

C. Need for the field?

D. Visibility/Acceptance?

E. Graduate Training?

F. Theoretical Perspectives?

G. Research?

H. Any other changes not covered above related to personnel, financing, administration, leadership, associations, or _____?

9. Who are the people who have influenced you:
   A. Directly?

   B. Indirectly?

   C. Outside adult education?

10. What are the top five books that have influenced your thinking/career in the field or outside of it?

11. Are there any other major influences (philosophical or social) that affected your career?

12. What values or beliefs in adult education have you sought to preserve or enhance?

13. How have your personal perspectives on Adult Education changed over time?

14. What do you consider to be your major successes, accomplishments, or contributions to the field of Adult Education and/or personally?

15. What were the greatest disappointments in your career or personally?

16. Is there anything else you would like to add?

17. Is there someone you suggest we contact for this study? If so, can you provide contact information such as address, phone, e-mail address?

Please send or e-mail a copy of your vita with this survey.

Return to:

Researcher's name and address